

radicalism. A free Iraq will show all nations of the region that human freedom brings progress and prosperity. By working for peace and stability in the Middle East, we're making America and future generations of Americans more secure.

Our actions in Iraq are part of a duty we have accepted across the world. We're keeping our resolve, and we will stay focused on the war on terror. The United States will not stand by and wait for another attack. We will not trust the restraint or good intentions of evil people. We will oppose terrorists and all who support them. We will not permit any terrorist group or outlaw regime to threaten us with weapons of mass destruction. And when necessary, we will act decisively to protect the lives of our fellow citizens.

As our Nation confronts great challenges, we rely, as always, on the goodness and courage of the men and women of our military. Like all our men and women who continue to serve in Iraq, you've done hard duty far from home and family, and I know you'll never forget the people who fought at your side. As a major from Miramar said of his fellow marines who served in Iraq, "They are my brothers and sisters." Each of you recalls especially the ones who gave their lives for freedom of others. The United States will always honor their memory. And today we ask the Almighty's blessings on those who grieve here on Earth for their loved ones.

I know you're proud to wear the same uniform they wore. Each of you has chosen—you have made the choice to fill a great calling, to live by a code of honor, in service to your Nation, for the safety and security of your fellow citizens. You and I have taken an oath to defend America. We're meeting that duty together, and I am proud to be the Commander in Chief of such a fabulous group of men and women who wear our uniform.

May God bless you. May God bless you and your families. May God continue to bless the United States of America. *Semper fi.*

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:23 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Lt. Gen. James T. Conway, USMC, commanding general, I Marine Expeditionary Force; Maj. Gen. James F. Amos, USMC, commanding general, 3d Marine Aircraft Wing; Maj. Gen. (Select) Jon A. Gallinetti,

USMC, commander, Marine Corps Air Bases Western Area, and commanding general, Marine Corps Air Station Miramar; Nurjaman Riduan Isamuddin (known as Hambali), Al Qaida's chief operational planner in Southeast Asia; Khalid Sheik Mohammed, senior Al Qaida leader responsible for planning the September 11 attack, who was captured in Pakistan on March 1; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

Remarks on the Power Blackout in Portions of North America and an Exchange With Reporters in San Diego, California

August 14, 2003

The President. Today our country—a major portion of our country was affected by rolling blackout. Canada was affected; over 10 million people in Canada were affected as well. And I have been working with Federal officials to make sure the response to this situation was quick and thorough, and I believe it has been.

We're focused on two major things right now. One is to work with State and local authorities to manage the consequences of this rolling blackout. In my judgment, the Governors and mayors of the affected States and cities have responded very well. We've offered all the help they need to help people cope with this blackout. And they've—to this moment have said they've got the resources necessary to handle it. The emergency preparedness teams at the local level and the State level are responding very well.

I also want to thank the people in the affected cities and States for their calm response to this emergency situation. It has been remarkable to watch on television how resolved the people are about dealing with this situation, and it's—I'm grateful for that. And I know their neighbors are grateful as well for the proper and calm response.

The other thing, of course, we're working on is to get electricity up and running as quickly as possible. And Federal officials are working with State and local officials to get the electricity grid up and running. Our goal, of course, is to do this as quickly as possible. Obviously, the sooner we can get electricity up, the more normal people's lives will become.

One thing I think I can say for certain is that this was not a terrorist act. I've heard reports about a lightning strike in Niagara Falls, New York, and we're—Federal officials, of course, are investigating the veracity of that. We'll find out here what caused the blackout. But most importantly, what we now need to do is fix the problem and to get electricity up and running as quickly as possible.

I was pleased to hear that many of the airports up East are beginning to have flights leave, and that's good. So in other words, slowly but surely, we're coping with this massive national problem. Millions of people's lives are affected. I fully understand that their lives will not be normal for the short run and hope that they continue to cope with this in a manner that they have done so far. I'm confident we can get things up and running as quickly as possible and people's lives will go back to normal.

Yes.

Security of the Power Grid

Q. Mr. President, does this suggest that even with all the attention paid to homeland security, that the electrical grid is still vulnerable, should it have been a terrorist attack?

The President. Well, I think, you know, one of the things we'll have to do, of course, is take an assessment of why the cascade was so significant, why it was able to ripple so significantly throughout our system up East. And that'll be a very important part of the investigation once we deal with the immediate—and the immediate, of course, is to take care of people.

You know, for example, in New York City, Mayor Bloomberg has ordered out thousands of police officers on the street to help bring calm. Firefighters are working overtime. Emergency crews are out working well. My focus is to work with State and local authorities to help deal with the immediate problem. Of course, we'll have time to look at it and determine whether or not our grid needs to be modernized. I happen to think it does and have said so all along. But this will be—this is going to be an interesting lesson for our country, and we'll have to respond to it.

Cause of the Blackout

Q. Mr. President.

The President. Yes.

Q. Do we know why this happened?

The President. Well, as I say, I saw a preliminary report. But we'll find out why, and we'll deal with the problem.

Federal/State/Local Cooperation

Q. Mr. President, you said that the State and locals had said they have all the resources they need. Can you talk about what the Federal Government might do or might already be doing to help them out?

The President. Well, one thing, of course, we're doing is we're getting the airlines running. The FAA is—as I understand, has cleared flights out of LaGuardia and Newark, for example.

The organization of Homeland Security is aimed at quick communications with State and local authorities, and I think that that communication was quick and thorough. I talked to Secretary Ridge several times. Governors have been notified, and mayors have been notified, and we're prepared to do anything that we can upon request.

Q. But it doesn't sound like they've asked you yet to do very—

The President. Not much, because they're well prepared. I mean, the first thing that I think Americans ought to be pleased about is the fact that we're better organized today than we were 2½ years ago to deal with an emergency, and the system responded well. Secretary Ridge was telling me 30 minutes ago how quickly the local authorities responded and how good the communications were between the Federal Government, the State Government, the local government.

It's a serious situation, but the people whose lives have been affected need to know there's a lot of people working to enable them to get on about their lives in a normal way. And hopefully, electricity will be restored soon. I can't tell you exactly when, but I know a lot of people are working overtime to get it done.

Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:24 p.m. at the Manchester Grand Hyatt. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Michael Bloomberg of New York City.

Remarks at a Bush-Cheney Dinner in San Diego

August 14, 2003

The President. Thanks for the warm welcome. It's really great to be back in San Diego, California. What a fabulous city. I want to thank you for your help. You all have done a tremendous job of helping us get started in the campaign. The way I look at it is, you're laying the groundwork for what will be a great nationwide victory in November of '04.

I appreciate your generosity. But I'm going to warn you, I need your help in energizing the grassroots, for putting up the signs and making the phone calls and telling your fellow citizens—Republican, Democrat, independent, could care less—that ours is a message that is hopeful for every single person who lives in this country.

I'm loosening up—[laughter]—and I'm getting ready. But the political season will come in its own time, because I have a job to do for the American people. I'm focused on the people's business. We have a lot on our agenda, and over the next months I will continue to work hard to earn the confidence of our fellow Americans by making sure America is secure and strong and prosperous and free.

My only regret is that First Lady Laura Bush isn't here tonight too. She is visiting her mother in Midland, Texas.

Audience member. [Inaudible].

The President. You're right. [Laughter] I am really proud of her. She is a fabulous First Lady, but most important, she's a great mother and a great wife, and I love her dearly.

I want to thank my friend Brad Freeman. I thought for a minute he was going to announce for Governor, he spoke so long. [Laughter] He's been a longtime friend, just as has Gerry Parsky. Both of these friends are working hard in '04, just like they did—for the '04 election, just like they did in 2000. I'm proud to stand with them.

I also want to thank my friend Mercer Reynolds. Mercer is from Cincinnati, Ohio. He's dedicating a lot of time to make sure our national finance effort is as strong as I know it's going to be. I appreciate you, Mercer.

We've got members of the congressional delegation here today from the mighty State of California, Duncan Hunter and "Duke" Cunningham and Darrell Issa. I'm honored they're here.

I appreciate the Mayor, Dick Murphy, for greeting me. Mr. Mayor, thank you for your strong support. I want to thank the event co-chairmen here from San Diego. You all have done a fantastic job. I'm proud to call you friends, and I thank you for your support.

In the last 2½ years, our Nation has acted decisively to confront great challenges. I came to this office to solve problems, not to pass them on to future Presidents and to future generations. I came to seize opportunities instead of letting them slip away, and we are meeting the tests of our time.

Terrorists declared war on the United States of America, and war is what they got. We have captured or killed many key leaders of the Al Qaida network, and the rest of them know we're on their trail. In Afghanistan and Iraq, we gave ultimatums to terror regimes. Those regimes chose defiance, and those regimes are no more. Fifty million people in those two countries once lived under tyranny, and now they live in freedom.

Two-and-a-half years ago, our military was not receiving the resources it needed, and morale was beginning to suffer. We increased the defense budget to prepare for the threats of a new era. And today, no one in the world can question the skill and the strength and the spirit of the United States military.

Two-and-a-half years ago, we inherited an economy in recession, and then our country was attacked. And scandals in corporate America became evident, and war began to affect the people's confidence. But we acted. We passed tough new laws to hold corporate criminals to account. And to get the economy going again, I have twice led the United States Congress to pass historic tax relief for the American people. Here is what I believe and here is what we know: When Americans have more take-home pay to spend, to save, or invest, the whole economy grows, and people are then more likely to find a job.

I also understand whose money we spend in Washington. It's not the Government's money. It's the people's money. We're returning more money to people to help them